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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: THE DEVELOPMENT AND EXERCISING
OF AVIAN AND PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLANS

REF: STATE 22992

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. Avian influenza (AI) preparedness is a concern for the Dominican Republic. According to Embassy sources, the country has conducted very few AI response exercises. Currently only the Ministry of Agriculture has completed its response plan and has sponsored exercises, focused mainly on responding to animal outbreaks. To date, no preparedness exercises have been conducted to evaluate the Dominican response to a pathogenic H5N1 infecting a human in the Dominican Republic, without Human-to-Human (H-2-H) transmission, or a sustained H-2-H pathogenic H5N1 transmission in the Dominican Republic. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) The country has a national Influenza Commission that includes the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Education and Tourism, Civil Defense and the private sector. The person in charge of coordinating this commission is Dr. Elizabeth Gomez, Director of the Epidemiology Department at the Ministry of Health and head of a Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) financed project.

[1](#)3. (U) At the end of October 2006, health and agriculture officers from Haiti and Central America conducted an emergency preparedness seminar hosted by the Dominican Ministry of Agriculture. This seminar included bio-security plans for large scale poultry farms and practical sessions on depopulation and disinfection given by APHIS officials.

[1](#)4. (U) The Ministry of Health, with the support of PAHO and the CDC, started a one-year project to strengthen the capacity of a rapid reply to pandemic and avian influenza in the Dominican Republic. In November 2006, a CDC team based in Guatemala visited the Dominican Republic to initiate the project to strengthen the capacity for the detection, surveillance, and rapid response to the avian influenza. This program, working in coordination with PAHO, has hired one epidemiologist who is currently completing the influenza preparedness plan and its protocols for the Dominican Republic. A meeting to be held this month in Costa Rica (March 9) will discuss the protocols with their Central American colleagues. The plan is expected to be completed in April. In May 2007 a drill will be held to test the country's avian influenza preparedness; Dominican personnel trained in November 2006 in Guatemala are expected to be training local leaders in preparation for this drill.

[1](#)5. (U) USAID/Washington holds monthly teleconferences with all the countries it supports in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region to share information, get technical updates, report on particular situations, and maintain a coordination mechanism for surveillance and rapid regional response in case of an outbreak or epidemic. A website has been set up for information sharing. The contact person in USAID/Washington for this LAC teleconference is Peg Marshal.

[1](#)6. (U) PAHO is very active in the Dominican Republic and has

trained its technicians in diagnostic techniques for influenza viruses in humans. Additionally, the Japanese government has created the "Center for Medical Education and Friendship for Japanese and Dominicans" (CEMA DOJA). It has the potential to be a very robust infectious disease surveillance center, but lacks the needed reagents to sustain surveillance measures. The Ministry of Agriculture has another laboratory prepared to work with animal cases.

17. (U) This report and extensive other material can be consulted on our SIPRNET site,
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>
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